

Project L.I.F.T. Re-Branding Campaign

Background and Purpose

When Project L.I.F.T. was launched publicly the program was explained as an educational reform project that sought to bring innovative strategies to the table to help decrease the achievement gap. The community conversation centered on several points:

- The \$55 million fundraising goal
- West Charlotte High School
- The West Corridor of Charlotte
- Low-income and minority students

At the time these were important points to discuss as need for such a project needed to be explained and the cost of the project was very important as the initial launch was a very public fundraising drive. The program has reached its initial fundraising goal; however, the conversation around the program continues to develop around the same key points. This is problematic for two main reasons:

- The strong focus on the \$55 million budget is misleading. The focus on the dollars, some of which have been spent during year 1 and year 2 implementation does not show that while there was a goal of \$55 million, the budget is not still \$55 million. In addition, it removes the focus from the actual work taking place by staff each day.
- The strong focus on West Charlotte High School takes focus away from one of the key strategies for Project L.I.F.T. – to build a strong academic foundation for students from Pre-K to eighth grade. In preparation for year 1 implementation in the schools (actual year 2 of the Project), the Project L.I.F.T. zone was formed. The zone is comprised of two elementary schools, five PreK-8 schools, one true middle school and one high school. The elementary, PreK-8 and middle school all feed into the high school. The goal of the strategy is to build strong students from the beginning so they are ready to enter West Charlotte, the high school in the zone, students will be academically prepared and on track for graduation.

These issues have posed issues in the community for the program, including a lack of understanding on Project L.I.F.T.'s purpose and goals among staff and the community.

Internal and external research suggests staff, teachers, parents, students and community members have a hard time explaining Project L.I.F.T. Many fall back on the key points from the launch to discuss the program, but no one can speak to the strategic direction of the program or the current impact being witnessed in year 1 of implementation in schools.

The Need

There needs to be a concerted effort to begin to reframe the community conversation around Project L.I.F.T.

The Goal

To tell the story of Project L.I.F.T. with a focus on our goals and strategies. This can be done in several ways:

- Educate stakeholders on the Project L.I.F.T. strategy
- Engage stakeholders in the implementation of Project L.I.F.T.
- Share success stories with the community

Strategies

We want to:

- Take the focus off of the \$55 million dollar budget and the poor kids on the Westside of Charlotte. Some even have suggested that our goals of 90% of students reach proficiency in reading and math 90% graduation rate and 90% of students on grade level are too high for the population.
- Talk about the strategies we are employing that are transforming education.
- Focus to be on our intentional work and the success that happens when you are strategic and work with extraordinary people (students, staff and the community).
- Build sustainability systems that will allow our work to continue even if the funding doesn't.
- Create a culture in our community where they own education through advocating for kids and what's best for them, seeking opportunities to help each other succeed and realizing that the kids in the schools don't belong to just their parents, they belong to all of us.

Tactical Implementation

- Create a campaign to describe Project L.I.F.T. using the strategic pillars and project outcomes. Overall the campaign should:
 - o Be creative and engaging
 - o Follow the Project L.I.F.T. branding guide
 - o Connect the educational challenges and the resulting early successes being seen in schools
 - o Include a training component for staff and stakeholders
- Train and educate stakeholders on the Project L.I.F.T. conversation
- Reshape media conversation around Project L.I.F.T.

- Have editorial meetings to discuss new campaign and new conversation around Project L.I.F.T.
- Create a boilerplate for press releases to help reshape media conversation
- Create collateral materials that support the new conversation and branding
 - Website update
 - 5x7 cards
 - Tent cards for school offices

Suggested campaign: The Project L.I.F.T. Formula

(LIFT) 5 = 90³

- LIFT is the focus on our strategic pillars: time, talent, technology, parent and community engagement. It is the intention and innovation that will make this successful. It encompasses everything from the classroom to the community.
- 5 is the number of years that we have to be successful.
- 90³ is the outcome – 90 percent proficiency, 90 percent on grade level, 90 percent graduation rate.

Stakeholder Groups

- Funders
- Staff
- Teachers
- Advisory Group Members
- Parents
- Students
- Community Organizations serving our students/neighborhoods/operating in our corridor
 - Project Safe Neighborhoods
 - Indaba
 - Neighborhood leaders along corridors
 - Patsy Burkins and Out of School Time crew in our corridors
 - City of Charlotte Neighborhood and Business Services